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Abstract of the national paper of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

1. The British National Space Centre (BNSC) is a partnership body that brings together the United Kingdom's space effort, embracing Government, industry and the academic community. Its objectives are set out in a national plan, the latest edition of which will be issued shortly following wide consultation with British industry and the scientific community.

2. The United Kingdom's space activities contribute to a number of the Government's broader aims. These include:

(a) Increasing quality of life through the application of new technologies;

(b) Encouraging sustainable development by monitoring and protecting the environment and developing new business processes; and the pursuit of new knowledge;

(c) Enhancing educational capabilities by building on strengths in the science and engineering base.

3. The Government invests some £200 million per year in civil space technology and services. Of this £90 million is committed through the Department of Trade and Industry's industry budget and £55 million through the Office of Science and Technology's allocations to the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council. Other investors include the Ministry of Defence in operational meteorological satellite systems, via the Meteorological Office and the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT), the Department of Transport, Environment and the Regions in climate data and the Department with UK National Air Traffic Services in satellite navigation.

4. Within its space policy, the Government has identified a number of industrial and scientific goals:

(a) To foster the development of innovative technology and its application in research and in commercial exploitation;

(b) To pursue the highest-quality astronomy and space science;

(c) To improve understanding of the Earth's environment and natural resources;

(d) To help industry maximize profitable business opportunities in the development and exploitation of space systems that improve the quality of life and enhance choice for consumers;

(e) To communicate those objectives and their significance to a broad audience.

5. The civil space community in the United Kingdom consists of about 6,500 employees in industry, about 500 academic staff and a similar number of postgraduate students in some 40 universities. In addition, the partners in BNSC employ around 400 people. The United Kingdom is the largest user of commercial space after the United States of America and the Russian Federation; the space-derived output of United Kingdom scientists is at least 10 per cent of the world's output of similar science, ranking second only to the United States. Public interest in space, measured in terms of media coverage, has increased dramatically. The United Kingdom's space industry turnover is growing at 10-15 per cent per year and now stands at around three and a half times the government civil space programme, a reflection of the United Kingdom policy of focusing on commercial opportunities in space.

6. The United Kingdom focuses on achieving its objectives as cost-effectively as possible. This is done through the BNSC partnership and by working in collaboration with others pursuing similar goals. Increasingly projects are co-funded with industry and potential service users in the better established and nearer-market areas of activity.

7. The United Kingdom has shared in Europe's space activities since they began more than 40 years ago. It was a founder member of the European Launcher Development Organization and the European Space Research Organization, predecessors to the European Space Agency (ESA). It welcomes moves by ESA to improve the competitiveness of the European space sector and to increase the role of the commercial sector in European space activity. About three-quarters of government spending on space is invested through ESA and EUMETSAT. The United Kingdom has also taken the lead in encouraging closer coordination between the space research programmes of the European Union and ESA. It is also a member of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites and other organizations.

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